

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

**West Central School District
Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Report 2004-2005**

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Date of On Site Visit: January 4, 2005

Date of Report: January 10, 2005

This report contains the results of the steering committee's self-assessment and the validation of the self-assessment by Special Education Programs. The report addresses six principles – General Supervision, Free Appropriate Public Education, Appropriate Evaluation, Procedural Safeguards, Individualized Education Program and Least Restrictive Environment. Each principle is rated based on the following scale:

- | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Promising Practice | The district/agency exceeds this requirement through the implementation of innovative, high-quality programming and instructional practices. |
| Meets Requirements | The district/agency consistently meets this requirement. |
| Needs Improvement | The district/agency has met this requirement but has identified areas of weakness that left unaddressed may result in non-compliance. |
| Out of Compliance | The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement. |
| Not applicable | In a small number of cases, the standard may not be applicable for your district/agency. If an item is not applicable, the steering committee should briefly explain why the item is NA. Example – no private schools within the district boundaries. |

Principle 1 – General Supervision

General supervision means the school district's administrative responsibilities to ensure federal and state regulations are implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability. The specific areas addressed in principle one are child find, referral procedures, children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools, students placed by the school district, improving results through performance goals and indicators (assessment, drop out, graduation), professional development, suspension and expulsion rates.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- District instructional staff information
- Suspension and expulsion information
- Statewide assessment information
- Enrollment information
- Placement alternatives
- Disabling conditions
- Exiting information
- Comprehensive plan
- Yearly child find results
- Referrals
- Publications of child find notices
- Surveys
- File reviews
- Private school information
- Child count data
- Student Information and Management System (SIMS)
- Individual Education Programs (IEPs)
- Budget
- Workshops and in-services
- Technology in Teaching and Learning (TTL)
- Staff development
- Board policies
- District newsletter

Meets requirements

The West Central School District has an established and effectively implemented ongoing child find system to locate, identify, and evaluate children with disabilities, ages birth through 21 years who may need special education. The district has a teacher assistance team (TAT) which meets to help students for pre-referral assistance. Frequently, the interventions implemented in the general classroom are successful and a referral is not needed. However, a referral system is in place to ensure students are identified without unnecessary delay

West Central School District has no private schools in district. When the district refers or places a child with disabilities in a private school or facility the district ensures special education and related services are provided in accordance with the federal and state laws. All students and their parents are afforded their rights no matter if they attend a private school or facility or a public school.

The West Central School District uses relevant school data to analyze and review their progress toward the state performance goals and indicators. All teachers, including special education teachers, are involved in reviewing and analyzing data to help them realize where the students' scores are in relation to the advanced and proficiency levels of accountability.

The West Central School District follows and adheres to the state guidelines for reporting students suspended, expelled, or dropped out as per the reports required by the state regulations. Should a student be suspended or expelled, the district would follow the policies and procedures outlined in the district's comprehensive plan.

The district state report indicates the school district employs and contracts with personnel who are fully licensed or certified to work with children with disabilities. The district adheres to policies and procedures for the appropriate supervision of these individuals.

Needs improvement

In staff surveys, fifty-five percent felt they had adequate training, supplements and supports to serve students on IEPs. Fifty-four percent indicated they had input into the implementation of staff development in the area of special education. Due to these findings, the district would like to improve procedures to determine personnel needs and address those identified needs.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee that the district is meeting requirements for Principle One, General Supervision, with the exceptions listed below.

Needs improvement

Interviews conducted by the monitoring team indicated a variety of opportunities for staff training. However, due to the staff surveys, the monitoring team agrees improvement can be made to ensure personnel development needs are determined and appropriate action is taken to meet those identified needs.

Out of compliance

ARSD24:05:24:01. Referral

Referral includes any written request, which brings a student to the attention of a school district administrator as a student who may be in need of special education. A referral made by a parent may be submitted verbally but a district administrator must document it. Other referral sources include screening, classroom teacher, other district personnel, public or private agencies and private schools.

File reviews and interviews with district staff indicated referral are not done for preschool children. Staff was not aware a written referral was needed for preschool children who may be in need of special education.

Principle 2 – Free Appropriate Public Education

All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment. The specific areas addressed in principle two are the provision of FAPE to children residing in group homes, foster homes, or institutions, making FAPE available when a child reaches his/her 3rd birthday and providing FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Data table E – enrollment information
- Data table F – placement alternatives
- Data table K – Early Intervention (Part C) exit information
- Data table L – complaints
- Data table M – hearings

- Data table N – monitoring
- Number of students screened
- Preschool age
- School age
- Budget information
- Surveys
- Age at referral
- Personnel training and staff development
- Comprehensive plan

Meets requirements

Current practices and past reviews from the state special education monitoring demonstrate the West Central School District provides a FAPE for all children with disabilities who reside within the boundaries of the district. All information is available to the monitoring team to review for assurances of this statement.

The West Central School District has had no suspension or expulsion of a student with disabilities for more than ten (10) accumulated school days. Policies and procedures are in place should this occur.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee that the district is meeting the requirement for Principle Two, Free Appropriate Public Education.

Principle 3 – Appropriate Evaluation

A comprehensive evaluation is conducted by a team of knowledgeable staff, which also includes parental input. A valid and reliable evaluation will result in effective individualized education programs for eligible students. The specific areas addressed in principle three are written notice and consent for evaluation, evaluation procedures and instruments, eligibility determination, reevaluation and continuing eligibility.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

- Data sources used:
- Data table G, Disabling conditions
- Data table H, Exiting information
- Data table I, Placement by age
- Data table J, Placement by disabling condition
- Teacher file reviews
- Surveys
- Comprehensive plan
- TAT information
- IEPs
- Parental report forms
- Initial referral
- Teacher report forms
- Permission to evaluate forms

- File reviews
- Evaluation reports
- Report cards
- Referrals
- Progress reports
- SIMS

Meets requirements

Based on the district's comprehensive plan and file reviews, the district conducts evaluations using a variety of valid, standardized tests, administered by trained, knowledgeable personnel and accurately reported to the team. The evaluation process includes parental input. File reviews indicate that the West Central School District is providing appropriate written notice and obtaining informed consent from parents before assessments are administered. The majority of evaluations were completed within the required timeline. One hundred percent (100%) of the files suspected of a learning disability the files contained a multidisciplinary team (MDT) report; however, the document did not contain required content. Changes have been made on the document to correct this finding.

The West Central School District has identified policies and procedures for proper reevaluation requirements. All procedural requirements are adhered to ensure students are appropriately evaluated for continuing eligibility in accordance with state and federal laws.

Needs improvement

The district uses a variety of assessment instruments, including functional assessment, although this wasn't always included in the reports, to determine eligibility and the need for special education and related services.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee that the district is meeting the requirement for Principle Three, Appropriate Evaluation with the exception of evaluation procedures (Eligibility). See information under: Out of Compliance

Needs improvement

Through file reviews and interviews with staff, the monitoring team concluded functional assessments are being completed since the start of the 2004-05 school year; however, the information is not adequately reported in the present levels of performance page of the IEP. File reviews indicated a limited amount of data that provides relevant information that directly assists persons in determining the educational needs of the student. It is recommended a wider variety of assessment tools be used to determine the student's needs (i.e. informal inventories, checklist, etc.) Once the information is gathered, the district needs to improve on analyzing the information to identify the student's strengths and weaknesses in specific skill areas, which can then be used, if appropriate, in a student's present level of performance on the IEP.

Out of compliance

Issues requiring immediate attention

24:05:25:04.03. Determination of eligibility

24:05:24.01:18 Criteria for Specific learning disability

Upon completing the administration of tests and other material as required, the individual education program team and other individuals determine whether the student is a student with a

disability. A student may be identified as having a specific learning disability under the following circumstances: (1) the student does not achieve commensurate with the student's age and ability levels in on or more listed in subdivision (2) of this section when provided with learning experiences appropriate for the student's age and ability levels; and (2) The team finds that a student has a severe discrepancy of 1.5 standard deviation between achievement and intellectual ability in one or more of the following areas: (a) oral expression; (b) listening comprehension; (c) written expression; (d) basic reading skill; (e) reading comprehension; (f) mathematical calculation; or (g) mathematical reasoning.

In two file reviews completed by the monitoring team, where revaluation of one student was completed in January 2004 and the other in November 2004, the disabling condition reported on the child count was not substantiated by documentation within the files. The students' evaluation information did not support the eligibility criteria for specific learning disability. Evaluation data in both files did not indicate a severe discrepancy of 1.5 standard deviation between achievement and intellectual ability in one or more of the areas listed above. Interviews with staff indicated the district uses the achievement (plus/minus) standard error of measurement to determine eligibility. The district must reconvene each student's IEP committee and revisit eligibility for special education or special education and related services.

Principle 4 – Procedural Safeguards

Parents of children with disabilities have certain rights available. The school makes parents aware of these rights and makes sure they are understood. The specific areas addressed in principle four are adult student/transfer of rights, content of rights, consent, written notice, confidentiality and access to records, independent educational evaluation (IEE), complaint procedures, and due process hearings.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Data table L - complaints
- Data table M - hearings
- Parental rights document
- Consent and prior notice forms
- Public awareness information
- Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)
- Comprehensive plan
- District surrogate letter
- Surveys
- File reviews
- School newsletters

Meets requirements

One hundred percent (100%) of the parents surveyed agreed they are informed of their parent rights.

Parents have been fully informed in their native language or another mode of communication of all information relevant to the activity for which consent is sought. Consent was received for extended school year in all files reviewed.

The West Central School District's comprehensive plan outlines all requirements on the issue of surrogate parents. The district has followed these procedures for the appointment of surrogate parents, when needed.

The West Central School District's comprehensive plan outlines the procedures for the maintenance of special education records. Parents are informed of their rights through the distribution of the parent rights brochure, which is included in all written prior notices of meetings and when consent is sought for evaluation.

The district has policies and procedures outlined in its comprehensive plan for responding to complaints.

The district has not had a request for a due process hearing within the past 6 years. All procedures for due process are addressed in the district's comprehensive plan.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee that data for Principle Four, Procedural Safeguards, meets requirements.

Principle 5 – Individualized Education Program

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by the IEP team, which includes the parent. The specific areas addressed in principle five are IEP team, IEP content, transition components for secondary IEPs, annual reviews, transition from early intervention program, and IEP related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

- Data sources used:
- Data table K – Early Intervention (Part C) exit information
- Data table N – Monitoring
- Comprehensive plan
- File reviews
- Student progress data
- Personnel training
- Budget information
- Surveys
- IEPs

Meets requirements

The district has policies and procedures in place for the provision of an appropriate IEP team. One hundred percent (100%) of files reviewed showed appropriate team members in attendance at all meetings. Also, one hundred percent (100%) of the files reviewed indicated the annual IEP review was completed within one year of the previous IEP.

The school district's written prior notice form includes the required content and is sent to parents five days prior to the meeting unless the parent waives the five-day notice requirement. The district's comprehensive plan includes policies and procedures to ensure an appropriate IEP is developed and in effect for each eligible student.

The district's IEP form includes all of the required content. Files reviewed showed one hundred percent (100%) had parent input on the IEP. All IEPs are written based on the individual needs of each student. File reviews by the district show one hundred percent (100%) of the time, IEP goals were linked to the present levels of performance, and eighty-seven percent (87%) had measurable short-term objectives that included conditions, performance, and criteria. One hundred percent (100%) of parents surveyed said they receive progress reports quarterly. One hundred percent (100%) of the files reviewed indicated the transfer of parental rights was addressed one year prior to the student turning eighteen years old. All files reviewed showed the graduation requirement to be addressed at least one year in advance, with specifics regarding how the student will graduate

One hundred percent (100%) of file reviews of students fourteen years or older included employment and living outcomes. File reviews of all students fourteen years or older included a course of study, and one hundred percent (100%) of file reviews of students sixteen years or older included statements of needed transition services. At the IEP meeting, the needs of the student for post-secondary activities are discussed and documented on the IEP. The district actively collaborates with agencies, such as Vocational Rehabilitation, Adjustment Training Centers, and various post-secondary technical schools and colleges. All students in the West Central School District take the Explore test in the eighth grade. All ninth graders are required to take the SD CAP, Career Assessment Program, which combines an interest inventory with a skills battery. Also, eleventh grade students take the ASVAB, which the district uses in the classroom as a career tool. All other assessments are administered on an individual basis, based on the needs of the student.

Needs improvement

Present levels of performance in students IEPs does not reflect the results of functional assessment results. File reviews done by district staff indicated present level of performance lacked required content in sixty percent (60%) of the student files reviewed.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee that data for Principle Five, Individualized Education Program meets requirements, except in the areas of present level of performance, extended school year (ESY), and transition. See information under: Out of Compliance

Needs improvement

The monitoring team addresses IEP- present level of performance under: Out of Compliance.

Out of compliance

ARSD 24:05:27:01.03 Content of individualized education program (IEP)

Present level of performance

A student's IEP must contain present levels of performance based upon the skill areas affected by the student's identified disability. The present levels of performance are based upon the functional assessment information gathered during the comprehensive evaluation process. In twelve of the twenty files reviewed, present levels of performance did not consistently contain the required content (i.e. specific skill area(s) affected by the student's disability, to include strengths and needs along with how the disability affects the student's involvement in the general curriculum). Parental input was consistently documented in the present level of performances. File reviews and interviews with staff indicated a need to improve functional assessments to acquire the needed information to develop present levels of performances for students eligible for special education services.

ARSD 24:05:25:26 Extended school year

Administrative rules state the district will provide extended school year (ESY) services to eligible children if the IEP team determines on an individual basis that such services are necessary for the provision of a free appropriate public education. When services are appropriate, an IEP team needs to specify goals and objectives to be addressed, determine the length of the school day, duration, determine the type(s) of service, state the amount of service needed and obtain parental consent.

In four of twenty files reviewed, the IEP indicated extended school year was needed indicating what goal(s) would be worked on and documentation of parent consent. Information lacking on the student's IEP for ESY was type of service(s), beginning date, ending date, and the amount of service(s). Interviews with staff indicated they had done these requirements on the previous IEP form; however, in switching forms all the required content information was overlooked when developing the IEP.

ARSD 24:05:27:13 Modifications to regular vocational program

ARSD 24:05:27:13.02 Transition services

Transition services are a coordinated set of activities for a student, designed within an outcome-oriented process, which promotes movement from school to post-school activities. The coordinated set of activities shall be based on the individual student's needs, taking into account the student's preferences and interests, and shall include instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and, if appropriate, the acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.

In file reviews for students in need of transition services, the IEP did not provide an outcome orientated plan designed to assist students in moving out of school into appropriate post-secondary settings. The present levels of performance did not contain the student's transition strengths and needs based upon evaluation. Individual Education Programs (IEPs) for transition age students did not contain activities/services, person responsible or initiation dates which would promote movement to adulthood. Potential activities were occasionally documented in the justification statement, for example, "will have the opportunity to job shadow different jobs over the next couple of years, ___ will also be taking different career inventory tests over the next few years." Staff interviews indicated transition activities do occur for the students but they were unclear as to how to document the services in the IEP.

Principle 6 – Least Restrictive Environment

After the IEP is developed or reviewed, the IEP team must decide where the IEP services are to be provided. Consideration begins in the general education classroom for school age students. The specific areas addressed in principle six are placement decisions, consent for initial placement, least restrictive environment procedures, preschool children, and LRE related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

- Data sources used:
- Data table E – Enrollment information
- Data table F – Placement alternatives
- Data table G – Disabling conditions

- Data table I – Placement by age
- Data table J – Placement by disabling condition
- Data table N – Monitoring
- File reviews
- Surveys

Meets requirements

The school district has policies and procedures in place for addressing the Least Restrictive Environment of students. All placements of students are done on an individual basis by the IEP team. Behavioral intervention plans have been written for students who need them.

Validation Results**Meets requirements**

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee that the district is meeting the requirements for Principle Six, Least Restrictive Environment.